

Bidi smoking cost India ₹80,550 crore in ill health and premature deaths

Hindustan Times, New Delhi | By [Sanchita Sharma](#)

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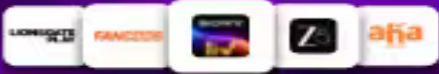

Bidi smoking cost India ₹80,550 crore in ill health and premature deaths in 2017, accounting for around 0.5% of its GDP and 2.24% of its total health spend, according to research published in Tobacco Control, one of the scientific journals published by BMJ.



At least 72 million people over the age of 15 smoke bidis in India, accounting for 81% of the tobacco smoked, according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2 (2016-2017) done by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and World Health Organisation.(File Photo)

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Direct costs, which include consultation fee, diagnostic tests, medicines, hospitalisation and transport, make up just under

21% (₹16,870 crore) of the total cost, with indirect costs of lodging and loss of income accounting for the rest.

The tax revenue generated from bidis was ₹417 crore in 2016-17. “The economic costs of bidi smoking far outweigh any perceived benefits, both in terms of the employment generated or the taxes contributed. It’s consumption needs to be regulated using effective public health policies,” said study author, Rijo M John, senior fellow at the Centre for Public Policy Research in Kochi, Kerala.

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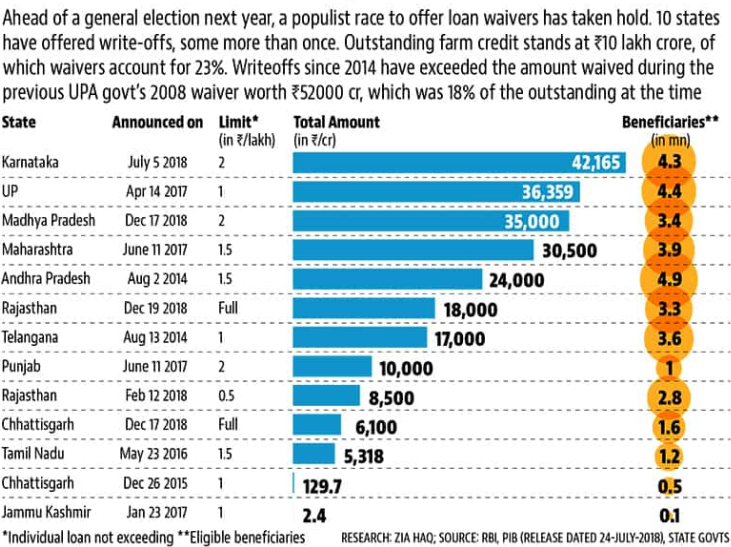


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Although a bidi is smaller and contains less tobacco than a cigarette, the nicotine content is significantly higher, said the study. And its relatively low burn point forces smokers to inhale more of the harmful chemicals, leading to several cancers, tuberculosis, lung diseases, heart disease and stroke, among others.

“Bidis are more dangerous than cigarettes and since the sector is unorganised, there is no quality control. There is nothing that tells us what is rolled inside the tendu leaf,” said Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, head and neck cancer surgeon and deputy director at Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai.

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Taxation is the single most effective tool for regulating consumption of tobacco, according to the World Health Organization. “Along with increasing public funding on health to 2.5% of the GDP, Niti Aayog on Wednesday proposed greater tax on tobacco, alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverages. This study will add weight to the need for taxing all forms of tobacco, including bidis, to lower addiction,” said

Dr K. Srinath Reddy, president, Public Health Foundation of India.

In India, bidis have historically been given a favourable tax treatment. “Cigarettes are taxed many times higher than bidis, which makes bidis cheap and leads to them outselling cigarettes by a ratio of 4:1. This needs to change and bidi taxes need to be increased many times more,” said John, who drew on several national and international data sources to estimate the direct and indirect costs of bidi smoking among 30-69-year-olds in 2017.

The employment generated by the industry does not outweigh the risks.“The employment offered by the bidi industry is seasonal and doesn’t lift those employed out of poverty line. It’s not gainful employment, it damages the health of workers and sometimes employs child labour. Increasing taxes and using the additional money to offer bidi workers alternative employment would bring huge economic and public health gains,” said Dr Reddy.

At least 63 million people are pushed into poverty in India because of expenditure on health. “About 15 million face poverty because of spending on tobacco and associated health costs, which also crowds out expenditure on food and education in India, especially among the poor,” said John.

The Tobacco Institute of India said it would not comment on the study and Umesh Parekh from the All India Bidi Industry Federation in Pune did not respond to phone calls and text messages seeking comment.

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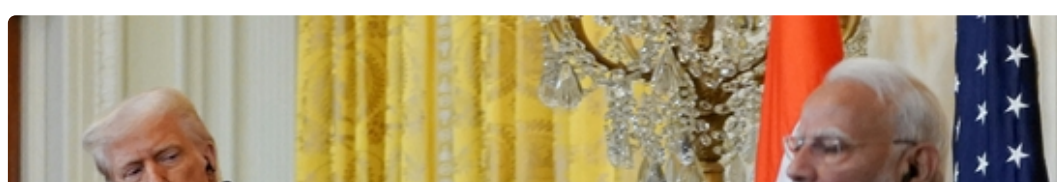
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PM Narendra Modi reveals why he ‘politely declined’ Donald Trump’s dinner offer: ‘Thank you, but...’

By [HT News Desk](#) | Edited by [Aniruddha Dhar](#)

Jun 20, 2025 10:48 PM IST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he declined an invitation from US President Donald Trump for a dinner meeting, prioritising his visit to Odisha.





US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi attend a joint press conference at the White House in Washington, DC, on February 13, 2025. (REUTERS)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday revealed that he had turned down an invitation from US President Donald Trump for a dinner meeting in Washington, choosing instead to travel to Odisha.

Speaking at a public event in Bhubaneswar, PM [Narendra Modi](#) said, “Just two days ago, I was in Canada for the [G7 Summit](#). While I was there, US President Trump called me and said ‘since you are in [Canada](#), come via Washington. Let’s have dinner and talk.’ He extended the invitation with great insistence.”

Modi said he respectfully declined the offer. “I told the US President, thank you for the invitation. But it is very important for me to go to the land of Mahaprabhu (Odisha),” Modi said, referring to the revered Jagannath Temple in Puri.

“Your love and devotion to Mahaprabhu brought me to this land,” the Prime Minister added, addressing the crowd.

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‘Embarrassment for...’: Indian defence secretary on Donald Trump-Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir dinner meet

Jun 20, 2025 09:38 PM IST

Pakistan army chief Asim Munir met US President Donald Trump in the White House earlier this week.



Field Marshal General Asim Munir.(AP)

It is an embarrassment for Pakistan that its Army chief General Amir Munir was invited for a meeting with US President Donald Trump and its country's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was "nowhere to be seen", defence secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said.

In an interview with news agency ANI, Rajesh Kumar Singh said [Munir's meeting with Trump](#) in the White House is an indication "where the sort of power relationship lies" in Pakistan.

"I don't have any great opinion on this, but it's surprising. It must be an embarrassment to any country that the military chief gets invited and the prime minister is nowhere to be seen. It's a very strange thing," Singh said without taking any names while responding to a question about Asim Munir's meeting with Trump.

Singh also expressed surprise at Asim Munir's presence in the Special Investment Facilitation Council in Pakistan, which makes economic decisions.

"I always found it very strange that this gentleman sits on something called the Investment Facilitation Council in Pakistan, which basically makes economic decisions," Singh told ANI.

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